

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 INRE-00
NSCE-00 USIE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
IO-13 TRSE-00 DHA-02 /077 W
-----161636Z 020523 /47

O P 161155Z MAY 77

FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1651

INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY

AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY

AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY

CINCPAC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ISLAMABAD 5012

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, PK

SUBJ: POLITICAL SITUATION IN PAKISTAN

REF: KARACHI 2315

1. SUMMARY: OPPOSITION POLITICIANS ARE RESPONDING NEGATIVELY
TO THE PM'S CALL FOR A REFERENDUM. SEVERAL PPP MEMBERS
OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (MNSA) HAVE TOLD EMBASSY FSLs
THAT UNLESS OPPOSITION PARTICIPATES, REFERENDUM WILL BE
MEANINGLESS AND FUTILE. MEANWHILE, THE PM IS CLAMPING
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DOWN FURTHER ON THE OPPOSITION BY ENDING ELECTION
COMMISSION INVESTIGATION OF ELECTION IRREGULARITIES
AND SEPARATING OPPOSITION LEADERS WHO HAD BEEN CONVOKED
AT SIHALA JAIL. WHILE HOPES FOR GOP-PAKISTAN NATIONAL
ALLIANCE (PNA) RAPPROCHEMENT DIM, ANOTHER ARAB EMISSARY --
KUWAIT'S FOREIGN MINISTER -- HAS ARRIVED IN PAKISTAN.
ANTI-AMERICAN CAMPAIGN IN PAK PRESS CONTINUES. END SUMMARY.

2. REACTION TO PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO'S MAY 13 CALL FOR A NATIONAL REFERENDUM ON HNU LEADERSHIP HAS EVOKED NEGATIVE RESPONSES FROM SOME NON-PPP POLITICIANS IN KARACHI (REFTEL). CONGEN LAHORE REPORTS OPPOSITION CIRCLES THERE DISTRUST ANY ELECTION HELD WHILE BHUTTO RETAINS CONTROL OF THE ADMINISTRATION. MORNING OF MAY 14, FOUNDER OF JAMAAT-I-ISLAMI (ONE OF THE NINE OPPOSITION PAKISTAN NATIONAL ALLIANCE CONSTITUENT PARTIES), MAULANA MAUDOODI, TOLD NEWSMEN IN LAHORE THAT REFERENDUM WOULD BE ENTIRELY ONE-SIDED AFFAIR BECAUSE MAIN POLITICAL LEADERS OPPOSED TO BHUTTO'S INCUMBENCY ARE CURRENTLY IN JAIL AND THERE IS NO PROSPECT FOR THEIR RELEASE. MAUDOODI REASONED THAT IF NEW GENERAL ELECTIONS ARE IMPOSSIBLE BECAUSE OF INTERNAL DANGERS AND FOREIGN INTERFERENCE, THERE CAN BE NO SAFE WAY TO HOLD PROPOSED REFERENDUM. HE CALLED ON THE GOP NOT TO MAKE THE REFERENDUM A CHOICE BETWEEN BHUTTO OR NOTHING. INSTEAD, HE PROPOSED THE CHOICE SHOULD INCLUDE AN ALTERNATIVE: BHUTTO OR THE PNA AS FUTURE RULERS. NAUDOODI REQUESTED THAT A VOTE OF NO-CONFIDENCE IN BHUTTO THROUGH A REFERENDUM SHOULD ALSO AMOUNT TO A REJECTION OF THE RULING PARTY ITSELF; THE NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLIES SHOULD BE DISSOLVED AS BEING TOTALLY UN-REPRESENTATIVE. MAUDOODI THEN WENT ON TO DECLARE THAT IN VIEW OF THE PM'S AND HIS PARTY'S CONDUCT IN THE MARCH GENERAL ELECTIONS, THE PEOPLE COULD NOT TRUST THEM TO HOLD A FREE AND FAIR REFERENDUM AS LONG AS BHUTTO CONTROLS THE ADMINISTRATION. MAUDOODI ALSO STATED THAT ACCEPTANCE OR REJECTION OF THE REFERENDUM PROPOSAL IS A DECISION

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THAT THE PNA LEADERSHIP WILL HAVE TO MAKE.

3. PNA ACTING PRESIDENT, PIR OF PAGARO, TOLD NEWSMEN EVENING OF MAY 14 IN ISLAMABAD THAT BHUTTO'S PROPOSED REFERENDUM IS UNETHICAL. HE ANNOUNCED FOR THE PM'S BENEFIT THAT BHUTTO AND PAKISTAN ARE NOT SYNONYMOUS. PIR SAHEB BLAMED BHUTTO FOR CAUSING THE "NIGHTMARE THROUGH WHICH THE COUNTRY HAS PASSED SINCE MARCH 7" AND DECLARED THAT THE PM'S CHARGE THAT THERE HAS BEEN INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTION IS UNFOUNDED. PIR SAHEB ANNOUNCED THAT THE PNA'S MOVEMENT WILL CONTINUE, PLEDGING THAT THEY WILL "UNDO THIS WRONG WITH COMPLETE DETERMINATION." HE ADDED THAT THE REAL QUESTION AT ISSUE IS THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTED MARCH 7, WHICH IS THE PRODUCT OF A FRAUD AND ACCORDINGLY MUST BE REPLACED IN A CONSTITUTIONAL FASHION.

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4. UNENTHUSIASTIC REACTION TO THE PROPOSED REFERENDUM
IS NOT LIMITED TO OPPOSITION POLITICIANS. MAY 16,
TWO EMBASSY POL FSLs MET MNA FRIEND AT HIS REQUEST. SIX
OTHER MNSA LATER COINCIDENTALLY JOINED THEM. THE GROUP
REPRESENTED MOST PARTS OF THE PPP POLITICAL SPECTRUM.
DURING THE CONVERSATION ALL THE MNAS STATED THAT IF THE PNA
DOES NOT PARTICIPATE IN THE REFERENDUM IT WOULD BE A FUTILE
AND MEANINGLESS EXERCISE. THEY SAID THAT THE PM HAS TO FIND
A WAY TO GET THE PNA TO PARTICIPATE.

5. MEANWHILE, THE PM IS CLAMPING DOWN FURTHER ON THE
OPPOSITION. THE GOP HAS SHOWN IT HAS NO INTEREST IN
PROLONGING ELECTION COMMISSION INVESTIGATIONS INTO
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ELECTION IRREGULARITIES, BY FAILING TO PROPOSE A BILL

IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SAVING THE MOST IMPORTANT OF THE ELECTION COMMISSION'S POWERS AFTER ITS EMPOWERING PRESIDENTIAL ORDINANCE WAS WITHDRAWN LAST WEEK. MAY 16 URDU DAILY NAWA-I-WAQT ALSO ANNOUNCED THAT SECRETARY OF THE ELECTION COMMISSION, HAS GONE ON LEAVE FOR TWO MONTHS BECAUSE OF DOMESTIC AND PERSONAL REASONS. IN ANOTHER MOVE, PIR OF PAGARO HAS BEEN PLACED UNDER HOUSE ARREST IN ISLAMABAD FOR THREE DAYS (BEGINNING MAY 15) UNDER THE DEFENCE OF PAKISTAN RULES. THIS FOLLOWS THE DIASPORA OF PNA LEADERS FROM SIHALA MAY 14. PNA PRESIDENT, MAULANA MUFTI MAHMOOD, WHO IS ILL, REMAINS AT SIHALA FOR TREATMENT. AIR MARSHAL (RETD) ASGHAR KHAN WAS AT FIRST SENT TO CAMPBELLPUR JAIL, BUT ON MAY 13 WAS SHIFTED TO SAHIWAL. OTHER PNA LUMINARIES HAVE BEEN SENT TO SEPARATE JAILS AS WELL.

6. THESE ACTIVITIES BY THE GOP MAKE HOPES FOR FURTHER RAPPROCHEMENT BETWEEN GOP AND PNA DIM FOR THE TIME BEING. HOWEVER, ANOTHER IN THE SERIES OF VISITING ARAB DIGNITARY-EMISSARIES HAS ARRIVED IN PAKISTAN. MAY 16 PAKISTAN NEWSPAPERS ANNOUNCED THAT KUWAITI FOREIGN MINISTER SHAIKH SABAH AAL-AHMAD AL-JABER AS-SABAH CALLED ON THE PM IN RAWALPINDI SUNDAY AND DELIVERED A MESSAGE TO BHUTTO FROM THE AMIR OF KUWAIT. PRESS TRUST-OWNED PAKISTAN TIMES MAY 16 EDITION DESCRIBED THE VISIT AS A SHOW OF KUWAIT'S SOLIDARITY WITH THE PM AND THE GOP.

7. ANTI-AMERICAN CAMPAIGN IN PAK PRESS CONTINUES. MAY 15 EDITION OF URDU DAILY MUSAWAT (PPP PARTY NEWS-PAPER) FRONT PAGED MASSIVE DIATRIBE AGAINST CIA HEADLINED "CIA ENEMY OF NATIONALIST GOVERNMENT." ARTICLE DESCRIBES KILLING AND OVERTHROWING NATIONALIST POLITICAL LEADERS AS "PET HOBBY" OF CIA AND ACCUSES AGENCY OF OVERTHROW OF SOEKARNO, MURDER OF SAUDI KING FAISAL, IRANIAN PREMIER MOSSADEQ, AND ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT KENNEDY. ARTICLE ATTEMPTS TO LINK PAKISTAN WITH CHILE AS SHOWING PATTERN

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OF CIA ACTIVITIES. LONG LETTER TO EDITOR IN MAY 16 PAKISTAN TIMES CONTINUES THIS PAK-CHILE ASSOCIATION. MAY 15 PAKISTAN TIMES OPED PAGE CARRIES "THE NEW GOSPEL" BY H.K. BURKI, WHO POINTS OUT THAT AMERICAN DIPLOMATS ARE IN HABIT OF COMPLAINING THERE IS NO PRESS FREEDOM IN PAKISTAN, BUT PROTEST WHENEVER A PIECE CRITICIZING AMERICAN POLICIES APPEARS IN THE PRESS. HE TOLD HIS PUBLIC THAT AMERICAN EMBASSY "FOR THE UMPTEENTH TIME IN THE PAST 10 YEARS" HAD LODGED A STRONG PROTEST ABOUT BURKI ARTICLE "THE WORLD POLICEMAN AGAIN" AND HAD ASKED THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS "TO SHUT UP." (AN OBVIOUS REFERENCE TO CHARGE'S ORAL PROTEST TO MFA ON MAY 12 REGARDING BURKI'S COLUMNS.) "CERTAIN CONCLUSIONS ARE INESCAPABLE." BURKI FINDS THIS

ATTITUDE INCONSISTENT WITH "THE NEW GOSPEL OF 'HUMAN RIGHTS'.
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Message Attributes

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